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| Relationships and Relationshipwrecks |
| 1. *What elements comprise a relationship?* 2. *Do we all need relationships?* 3. *Are all relationships in some way valuable?*   6th Grade Language Arts  Designed by Erich Rumback  CI 454E, Fall 2014 |
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Relationships and Relationshipwrecks - Unit Plan Rationale:

When choosing a theme for the creation of my unit plan, I tried to place myself in the mind of a 6th grade me. I thought about what was most important to me when I was the age of my students and decided that my relationships with others and my self-image were the two winning candidates. Therefore, the selected theme for this unit is the examination and analysis of successful and unsuccessful relationships. My students are likely already distracted from their studies with questions surrounding this theme in their own lives and it is my opinion that exploring their own relationships in the form of reflective writing will have positive educational and personal value to them. I agree with Bomer’s assertions that oral storytelling is “an especially good beginning for students who are learning English as an additional language and for any students for whom writing has sometimes been difficult” (Bomer, 2011) and I have a plan to capitalize on it. Every Monday, before beginning the week’s lessons we will sit in a circle and verbally share our past weekend’s experiences with the class for no more than ten or fifteen minutes as a class unless otherwise warranted. This will allow me to keep track of what is happening in my students’ home lives to some extent as well as encourage class rapport.

The weekly routine will consist of novel reading Monday through Thursday and breaks from the norm with other genres of script, radio broadcast, TV, and music. Students will be regularly summarizing and analyzing the relationships of characters from class readings from multiple sources in a variety of genres, with focus upon the novel, *When You Reach Me* by Rebecca Stead. Through class discussion and near daily completion of a Reading Summary Journal entry the students will demonstrate comprehension and reflection. Their RSJ summaries will require personal reflection upon the relationships between characters in Stead’s novel and other sources as well as an introspective examination of their own relationships. There will also be interdisciplinary connections in the form of Kansas Connections bringing local History into the class as well as Science in theorizing about time travel. The Performance Task offers opportunities for including Art and Music. However, the majority of the class time will be devoted to reading or writing. I will integrate Technology into the unit in the form of video and audio displays in class, and the production of video, visual, or audio production by some students. All students will also be given class time for computer based research.

I am a believer in the beneficial nature of graphic organizers, their practicality and user-friendliness for study or reference. Once completed, the graphic organizers which I have created for this unit can provide excellent study prompts, detailed reference, and when they are filed properly, they help explain to students the scaffolding of information that they have been taught. Fisher and Frey claim that graphic organizers aid in “extending student understanding of concepts and the relationship between them” (p.101). The possession of worthy, self-made study/reference material should increase a student’s comfort level with the information as well as their confidence and motivation to show mastery of the material. Therefore, weekly, students will use the Relationship Analysis Graphic Organizer to analyze the relationships between characters in the texts. The students will revisit their completed RAGO’s as part of preparation/research for the Writing Assignment and the Performance Task. Each student will file RSJ and RAGO assignments in a personal binder to keep in the classroom. Later, the Writing Assignment and Performance Task will allow students to use their assembled resources (RAGO) and recently explored thoughts about relationships (RSJ) and display their growing understanding in other ways.

When reading aloud or sharing readings with students I plan to stop periodically to facilitate “inferential questions that invite connections beyond the text as well” (Fisher & Frey, 2012, p.60.) The 6th grade character of Miranda from Stead’s novel will offer many opportunities for my students to relate the reading back to their own experiences. It will also help to keep them on task. Pauses for discussion help to keep them attentive for fear of publically failing to answer a random question about the text. Also, since there are many skills at work within the mind of a proficient reader, Think Alouds “provide students a glimpse into expert thinking” (Fisher & et al, 2011 p.130.) I prefer shared readings and discussion because I believe students learn when their ears, eyes, hands, and brains are active. I will also have a soft classroom ball to toss to students occasionally. They also need modeling of efficient thinking and absorption of materials. Combinations of Read Alouds, Audio Readings, shared Circle Readings, and Think Alouds give “the teacher opportunities to demonstrate how these comprehension tools are used throughout a reading” (Fisher &Frey p. 65.) It is my hope that through the shared reflection and analysis students can subtly develop their literacy skills while growing as people. My aim is to “help them notice, appreciate, and imitate the language of the text in their own writing” (Bomer p. 223) by providing them with meaningful writing experiences and acceptable audiences for publishing their work. My classroom philosophy regarding students’ rights and responsibilities within my class leans toward Progressivism. The school should serve as a model of democracy in regards to treatment of others, respect for authority, and experience aimed learning objectives. My students will be aware of their rights as individuals and expected to behave as model citizens should within a democracy.

At the end of the unit, students will have read Rebecca Stead’s novel *When You Reach Me*, and other short works including Richard Connell’s The Most Dangerous Game, and primary source letters written by early Lawrence, Kansas women. They will have watched video examples from history and popular culture (Buster Keaton, Bevis & Butthead, and Family Guy’s Brian & Stewie) and examined artistic images. Students will be then be required to display their ability to communicate about relationships. I believe that “writing and other forms of communication are civic skills that must be built throughout a student’s time in school” (Rubin, 2012.) Students will reflect upon their relationships with others and with themselves and the rewards and consequences surrounding personal interaction, thereby becoming better-rounded members of society.

The Relationships and Relationshipwrecks Unit will culminate with a Gallery Party in which will take place in the school auditorium or commons area with snacks and drinks. Students were given a choice multiple prompt options in the form of open-ended questions, as well as multiple genres from which to choose. Their choices will be used for expressing their feelings and understandings about the dynamic, ever-present subject of relationships with others and with oneself. They will present their work to the class and specials guests, such as the principal, lunch people, custodian, and other staff members and parents. My hope is that my students will express themselves in the forms of music, film, visual art, poetry, and other creative avenues.

Works Cited

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